WHISPERINGS

poetic magic & mystery

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Whisperings. Poetic Magic & Mystery
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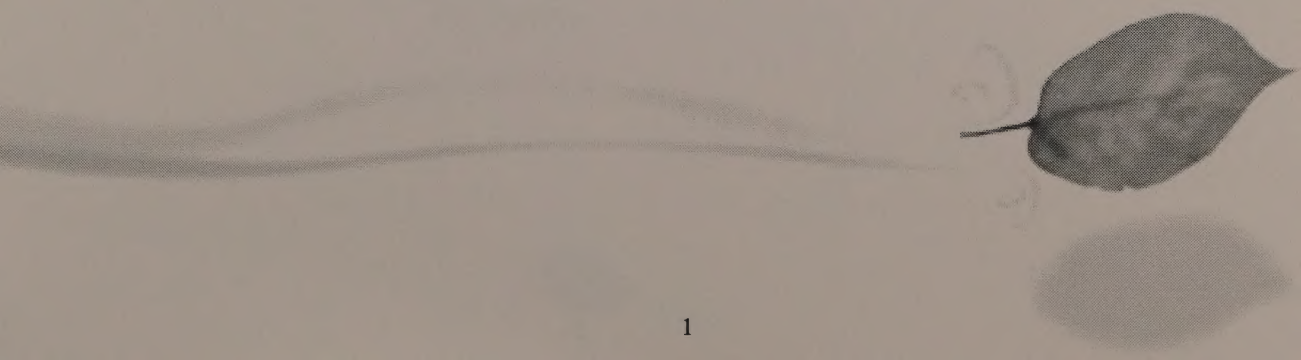
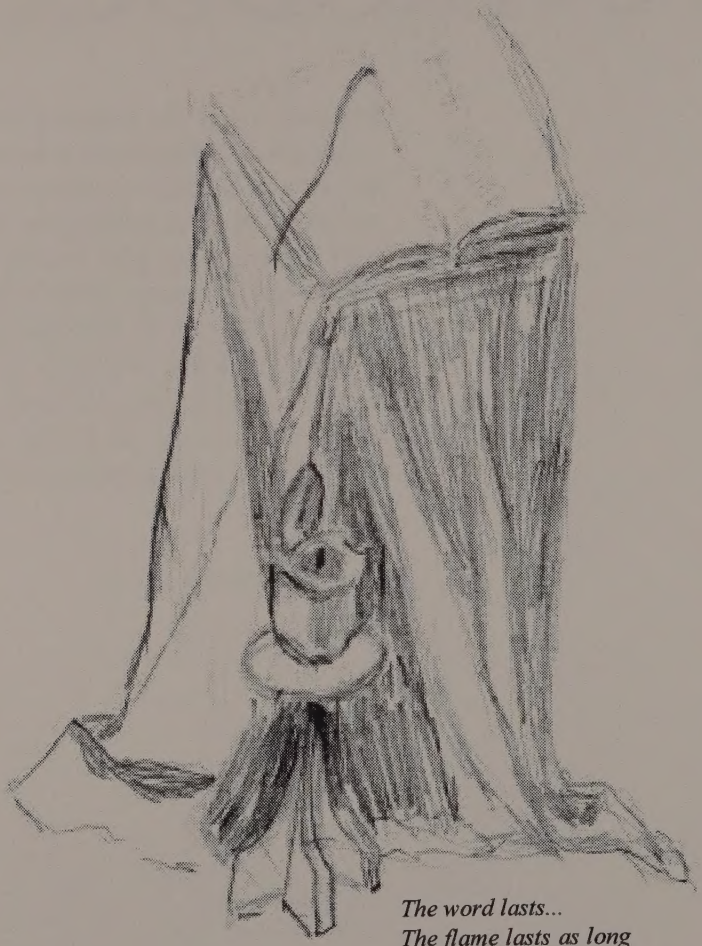
INTRODUCTION

Volunteering at The Learning Centre Literacy Association in downtown Edmonton has been, for me, a most lucrative source of intellectual, social, and spiritual gifts, freely given by learners and staff. Among those gifts was the opportunity to learn with the learners some basic steps in writing poetically. For me this has opened up the exciting world of matching awareness and reflection with words. The selections contained in this collection reflect my growing observation of and interest in my immediate surroundings and their influence in my life.

Aline Roulston S.C.I.C.





The word lasts...
The flame lasts as long
as I keep it alive.

COSMIC BIOGRAPHY

In the beginning
A star
Cosmic force
A grain of dust

Countless ages

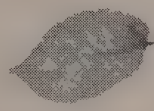
Elemental change
Adaptation and diversity
Life in new form and activity
Always living

Part of a universe
Sharing a vision
Forever striving towards
A goal of unknown parameters

Awe
Wonder
Hope

Lac Ste. Anne, 1994

AUTUMN LEAF



In tangled network of wind-bared branches
A single leaf clings in hope for imagined life,
While far below, forlorn and faded comrades
Lie disfigured on the ground,
Victims of every wanton breath of air.

"And I," says unfallen one,
"I remain, sturdy, faithful, whole.
My day has yet to come."

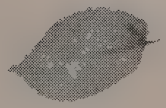
And I, aging, 'mid lingering memories
Of spring and summer 's glory.
Begin to share with autumn leaf
The struggle to prolong life,
To deny the call to another newness.

To what avail?
Life has its cycles –
Genesis, growth,
Flowering and fruit,
Finally, rest and letting go

SO BE IT.

This piece was written as a result of hearing a homily at a service for a teenager who had taken his own life. His family was feeling sorrow, disappointment and anger.

June, 1991



PROPHET

Truth pierces the heart:
touches the point of pain
of anguish
and of anger.
Truth knows where dwell joy
and peace
and pardon.

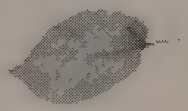
Truth heals through love
and patience
and ultimate understanding.
Truth is God.

And truth reveals the beauty of its bearer,
the one who listens and who ponders,
then allows Truth to mold her heart
so that she may risk the moment of its
proclamation.
And the bearer of Truth is Prophet.

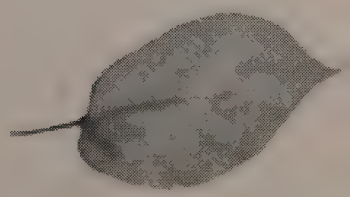
But Prophet has her own truth, too,
her own pain and joy and love,
her own anger and pardon and understanding.
And when Prophet, in daily action, and often in silence,
lives her own life in its fullness
Truth reveals the graciousness of God.

Three trees in new
leaf
April 27, 2000

THUNDERSTORM



Sultry air
Garden stillness
Early twilight
Smell of rain
Peach grey on horizon sinking low
Darker darker.
Pink flash
Count of ten, then distant roar,
Drops of rain, then even darker.
Closer boom.
Flash and count of four,
Thuds of water against the window pane.
A sizzling crack at count of two
And then more rain
A blinding flash, and now it's six.
Fading... fading...
Forecast: Rain in the morning
Sunny afternoon.
Night of dripping trees.



BACKYARD ROYALTY

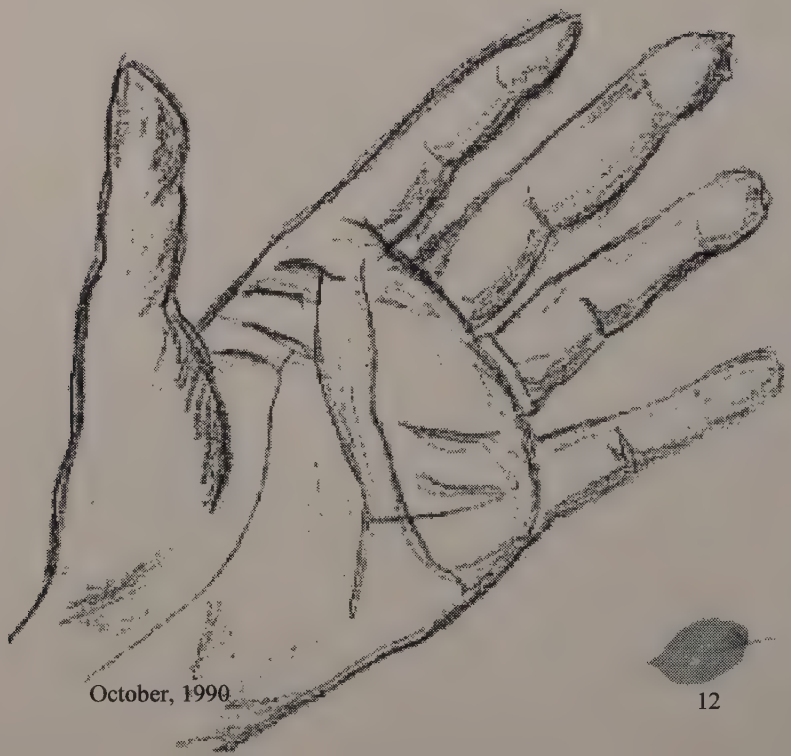
Majestic stance near back lane fence,
casting dappled shadows on the lawn,
courtesy of summer sun.
Lifting creator-ward long graceful arms
of wispy green finery that ripples
with delight at each waft of passing breeze

Tree prays…
Praise to the spirit of Mother Earth
who nourishes hungry limbs and leaves,
who provides stable anchor for a noble
stature.
Praise to the spirit of the Sun
for warmth and life,
for the hue and tint and season.
Praise to the spirit of the Atmosphere.
for air, for wind and gale,
for dew and rain and torrent.
Praise to the Creator of azure skies and
cloud and storm,
and ice and snow and sleet,
for resiliency to respond to tempest's flash
and roar
and to a sometimes over-abundance of
these gifts.

O Tree,
We, your friends, give thanks
for your ever gentle reminder of the worth
and beauty of creation,
for your golden leaves tinkling in an
autumn wind,
for long, sparkling filaments on a clear but
shortened day,
for lacy green announcing renewal of
hidden life around us,
for the dark emerald of your long-sleeved
summer boughs.

Noble tree, as we gaze heavenward,
past your silver trunk and branches,
we raise our prayer of gratitude to God.

Long may you live! Long may you reign
o'er our backyard!



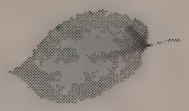
ON DAILY EUCHARIST

Last evening I looked at my hand,
palm up, lined and aging,
where daily lies the Bread...
Way, Truth and Life
Cradled but for a moment...
Creator, Redeemer, Friend.
Silence. Awe.

It is consumed, enlivens my being
for hours ahead.
Then, the day spent, comes anticipation
of tomorrow's
"Body of Christ, my friend."

Each morning I walk to Sacred Heart Church and each morning a different aspect of inner-city life catches my attention.

November, 1990



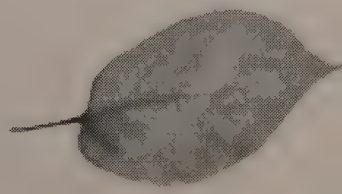
Children, multi-sized, bundled up against the cold,
at corner light –
Does God dwell here?

Three church spires drenched in
winter morning sun –
Does God dwell here?

Blood splattered on the sidewalk, a trail
along a city block –
Does God dwell here?

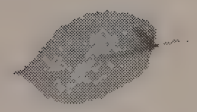
Shivering figures huddled against
a food bank door –
Does God dwell here?

Warmth in tired friendly eyes which know
the gamut of life's tragedies –
Yes God dwells here!



A wonderful new friendship within the last year has occasioned many, many moments of reflection on the mystery of friendship and God's generosity and love in revelation through special people in our lives.

December, 1990

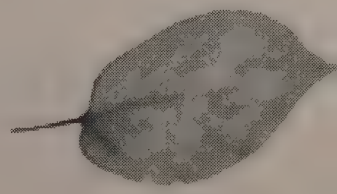


A new friendship alights upon my heart
Like a small bird, delicate, beautiful, tentative.
Its song brings life and hope for future strength
And a call to greater being.

But will it stay?
Will its feathers ruffle and in a moment of timidity
Lift anxious wings in flight,
Leaving behind empty space and silence?

How does a gift, at first so fragile and so cautious,
Grow in depth and meaning,
Liberating the Spirit within each of us
To touch new levels of understanding and trust?

O little bird, may I respect you, treat you gently,
And allow you the freedom to be as you will.
May I recognize in you the symbol
Of God's presence to me
In the person of my friend.



Early in January, 1991, I sat on a bench on the lower level of the Edmonton Centre. All around were signs for sales and clearance of Christmas merchandise. This reflection has uncovered for me the tension between my love of the fine things of life and my discomfort in facing the injustices in our Canadian society.

January 3, 1991

CONSUMERISM

Sale, sale, sale
in a busy shopping mall
Special here... Special there...
Bright, cosy mittens, hats and gloves
Save 30% on fur-lined boots and fashion leathers
Clearance of delicate china, sweet-smelling tapers,
elegant brass and baby-blue bubbles amid
shimmering silk and shiny, smooth satin
Great values
Values? What Values? What cost?

The cost of baubles to satisfy a "wanting" society
as it betrays the trust of those who need...
The cost of hungry eyes and hungry hearts
in street-abandoned tots...
The cost of dying dignity, respect and innocence
on the street corners of prostitution...
The cost of fleeing self-esteem and human worth
in noble native youth...

The Specials? The Savings?
The Clearance? The Values?
– 30 pieces of silver –
to betray the integrity of life of human kind.

Winters are long and dark in Edmonton, and so we begin counting the minutes of returning daylight immediately after the winter solstice.

January 30, 1991

HOPE IN A NORTHERN CLIMATE

Sparkling diamonds lie still atop
stiff white blankets on the lawn,
while black lace trees screen early morning gold.
Aging ice, in rough and greying hillocks,
clings to gritty city streets.
But the sun will set at 5:04 tonight!

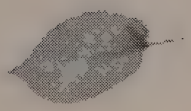
A saucy magpie screams across the January air,
the king of barren branches.
And liberated dogs trot by
on informal voyages of discovery,
eyeing furtive cats which dart between
protective houses.
And the sun will set at 5:04 tonight!

Frigid temperatures hold no threat
to coatless kids who dash across the street
to greet their friends,
and mother's call in worried disapproval
as the sun goes down at 5:04 this evening!

And dreaming adults long for milder days
when Earth will soften and open up her pores
to reveal tender, greening shoots,
the promise, once again, of life renewed,
For the sun will set at 5:06 tomorrow night.

Upon seeing a photo of footprints in the snow that I had taken, a good friend suggested that I write a poem on the subject. I tried... but nothing came. The following thoughts did come to mind, however.

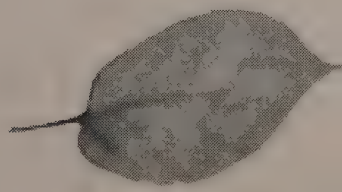
March 30, 1991

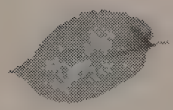


SPRING

Spring arrives with rapid strides.
Mirrored blue and white in murky waters,
As sun extends its stay with longer beams
And hidden treasures are uncovered.
Fading footprints in fast receding snow
Tell of someone's lonely journey,
While long lost pens and mitts and crayons, too,
Are loosed from under winter's icy hold.

Spring is here! Pain and cold, forgotten,
As the joyous days of summer beckon.
But not before our wond'rous God
Reminds us of his Love.
The suffering, dying and arising of his Son,
In equinox's fullest moon, whose circle brightness
Shines upon the rounding arms of Jesus,
As those arms embrace us all in tenderness
Born of long-dreamed of oneness in his Father.
Our Spring is here! Our life, renewed!
Praise be to God! Alleluia!





PUDDLES

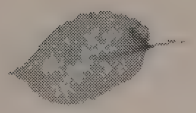
Children know that spring is for puddles.
Slushy snow welcomes tiny streams of water which
merge to form miniature rivers rushing to a drain.
What delight to make a dam of last years' leaves and silt from winter's sanding to create a "wading pool" for little feet!
Helpful cars, passing at good speed, splash idle waters from the street into small pools of increasing depth and temptation.
What need to worry about muddied mitts and dampened clothes.

First rains of the new season enjoy the puddle process, too.
They seek the dips in still-frozen ground to deposit oceans of fluid silver, an invitation for model, quick-built boats and barges.
Western breezes provide the roaring waves, mere ripples to unseeing eyes, for adventure on high seas.

But best of all comes with sunshine's gift of light on snow and shower's puddles.
The mirrored world of blue and branches joins heaven to our earth,
Giving mystery and magic to an upside-down world.

When I am alone in the house, the others being away, I often sit in the swivel rocker in the evening to pray. The rocker seems to turn itself to the window and so God's creation comes readily to my prayer and thought.

May, 1991



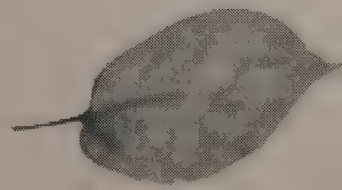
Lady Spring dons her dress of netted
green newness
over petticoats of blue and white and
sometimes grey.
She tosses diamonds carelessly upon
the grass
to be admired by early morning,
work-bound eyes.

She welcomes lilting nesters in the billows
of her skirt
and round her feet a multi-coloured carpet
spreads sweet scents as a climbing sun
sinks warmth deeper into her nurturing soil.

Skipping ropes and roller skates,
two-wheeled bikes and
baseball bats mark her appearance in
the neighborhood.
Life is renewed and sings its song of joy
'mid peals of children's laughter.
Evening comes and a now-sinking sun
lights golden sheen upon her gown.
Which softly, slowly, slips into
blackened silhouette
against a navy velvet wrap.

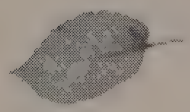
And as the darkness and the sweetness of
the night envelope earth
The Lady dons a crown of stars
with centre gem, a translucent moon.

She won't linger long, this Lady Spring,
So enjoy her to the fullest, oh gentle lovers
of her reign.
For ere long she will cede her place to the
more flamboyant Dame Summertime.

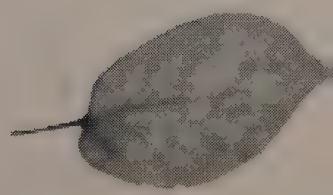


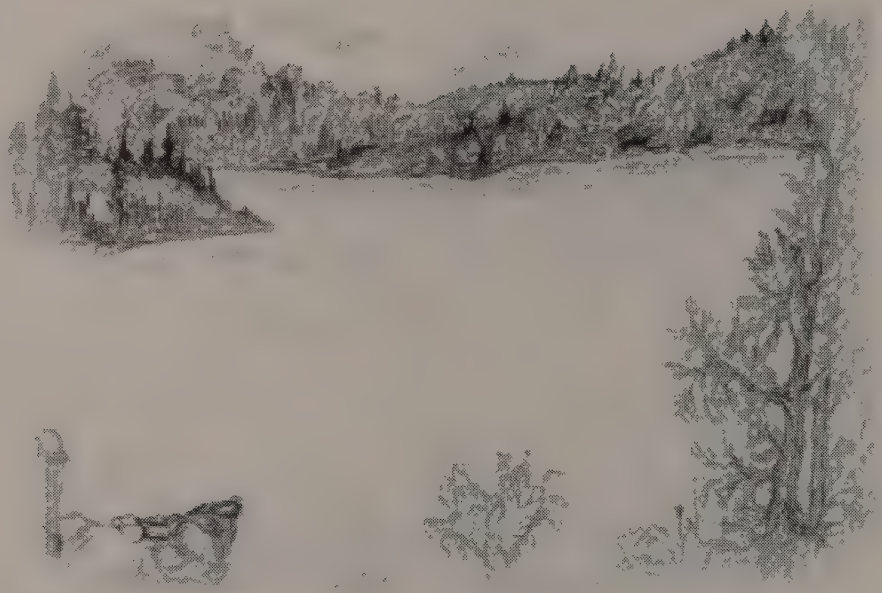
Nanaimo, B.C.
With young Oblates of Mary Immaculate
at their yearly meeting.

A SUMMER MEMORY



Giant trees
A coastal sky
a mirror lake
and August heat.
In cooling shade
a rustic bench
two friends
a shared solitude:
peace
trust
God.





The waters of seas and of rivers are constantly in motion. On a calm day lake waters are still and mirror like. On this wild October day the wind ruled the lake's surface and the remnants of a once lush green foliage.

October, 1991

AT LAC STE. ANNE

Gale force winds storm across blue and white and greying skies
– URGING –
Golden leaves, still clinging, afraid, yet unready to risk a fall.
– PUSHING –
Russet leaves as they toss and tumble to new homes
– DISTURBING –
Already settled leaves with an invitation to another romp before scudding across the grass to waiting hollows.
No rest. No rest.
While autumn breathes its fullest blast.
Once mirror lake races, wave on wave, to seeming stable shore, there to crash on glistening stone and then draw back to seek a new and restful place.

My heart may dance with swirling leaves,
may leap with water foaming at the shore,
But days there are when tempests rage,
and life's calm surface knows no peace.

When winds of sorrow, pain and grief
push my spirit to the edge.
Yet unlike the waves in nature's storm
I recognize my Rock:
beckoning, open-armed and welcoming.
Peace. Peace.

From September, 1991, to May, 1992, I went three times a week to physiotherapy at 7 o'clock in the morning. One February morning I was greeted by ice-covered sidewalks as I left the house. I walked 107 Avenue on the road but 95 Street would be another story.

February, 1992

AT 107 AVE *and* 95*th* STREET

"Good morning," she called
"Good morning," I said. "It's slippery today."
"Yeah, Give me your hand. I'll take you across."

Once across,
"You owe me two bucks," she quipped.
"You'd have it if I had it."
We laughed.

"The bus stops down there. Let me take you."
"Thanks."

I watched as she regained the corner,
waited for the next customer to stop
and then was gone into the early morning stillness.

Jesus touches us in many guises.
I had just placed my hand in the hand of the Man
from Galilee.

I went back to my childhood when we lived on Maple Street in Vancouver, and I remembered the content of a conversation I had with my Dad.

I USED TO THINK...

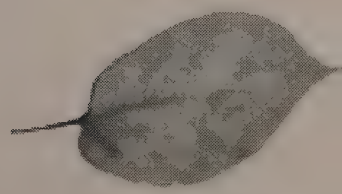
I used to think, when I was 5
That at 8 I'd be a boy.
Now at 69, I'm still alive,
Behold a woman. What a joy!

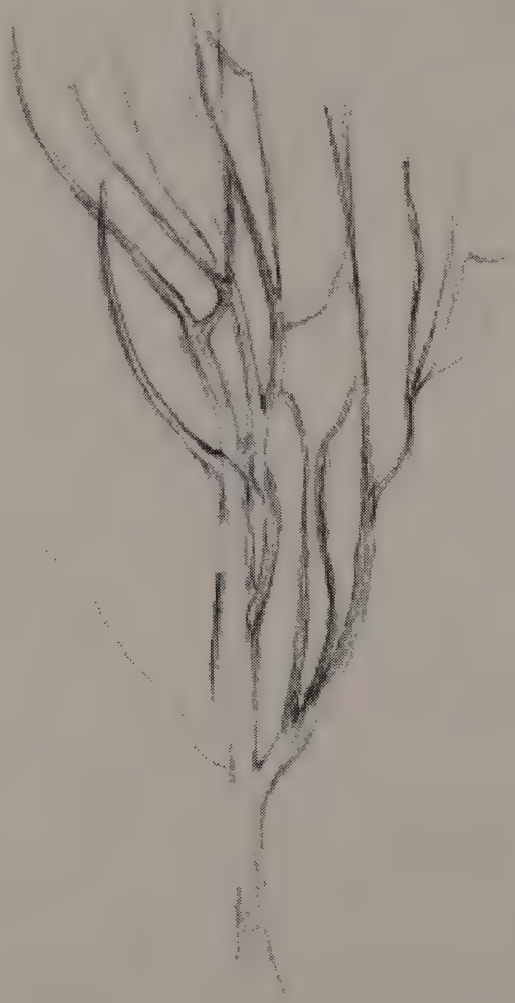
Another day at Lac Ste. Anne led to thoughts about an early spring flower and the blessing it brings.

June, 1992

NATURE'S CROWN

Silver perruqued ladies stand amidst golden youth
upon the lawn.
Bowing to each other at wind's gentle persuasion.
Some send their down curls aloft in search of yet
unpopulated space
to set up new royal courts whose emblem
"Dents-de-Lion"
sets antiseptic gardeners on edge at thought of new
invasions on greensward manicured.
But, Mother Earth, our Nature's Queen, holding
sway unlimited in her domain, uses means most
mystical to ensure reflection of her crown, the
golden sun...
And thus the dance of gold and silver heads in
emerald fields bring promise of sunlight's warmth
and nurture to our northern world.





Again at Lac Ste. Anne we spent a late evening before a glorious fire on the patio. The wood came from the fence David, a friend, had torn down during the summer.

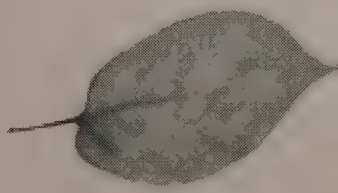
OCTOBER NIGHT

A glowing moon plays hide and seek through
birches' lacy blackness
While distant lights send golden shafts across the
wind – still lake.

Close by the campfire
Where fiery fingers launch playful, spiral sparks on
a journey heavenward –
They who race toward stardom unattainable,

We sit in silence, wrapt in outer darkness
attentive to the music of the fire's roar
and the crackling of its tympany,
as rhythmic dancers spread graceful arms
along the contour of the wood, and then,
themselves, reach out beyond their fuel's sphere to
heat the cooling air.

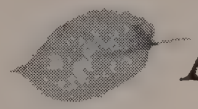
Light, darkness, warmth and chill
unite in paradox to offer – to us, delight
and to the Creator – praise.



This was written in response to an invitation to express an experience of a day's retreat.

October 31, 1992

EXPERIENCE OF A DAY



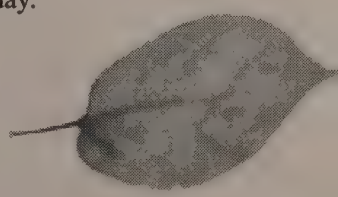
It's now July, 1993!

Waning moon in morning sky,
Golden beams announcing day
Bird song, gentle breeze and
growing hum of city life.
Call me forth to know God's gift.

A gift of creation
A gift of love
A gift of healing one another.
As we meet and work and pray and play.

Then light recedes and all is silhouette
against the paling heavens.
As God beckons darkness to bring us sleep
And thus renew us in her bosom.

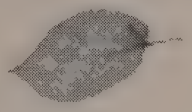
We are awakened
We are loved
We are strengthened
We are recreated for another day.



When the anniversary of ordination to the priesthood of my friend rolled around, I had no suitable gift for him so I wrote these lines.

July,1993

ANNIVERSARY

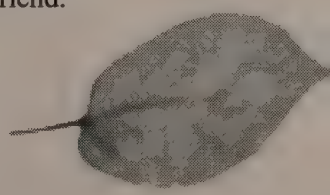


Marks a glorious moment of choice.
Memories of praise, of thanksgiving,
of beauty and song,
of loved ones and strangers,
rejoicing, celebration, unity.

Scenes, sights, sounds slowly slip
from mind as the years pass.

Anniversary now becomes
An invitation to renew,
to step beyond yesterday's limits
to greet new dawns and new horizons
As a new person
with new gifts
and new sources of strength,
and love and laughter,
new understanding and compassion.
All clothed in that first choice –
To love and to serve.

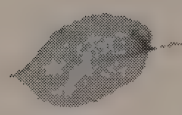
Happy Anniversary, my dear friend.



One early January day, 1994, I sat in front of the sitting room window and contemplated the scene before me. This is the result.

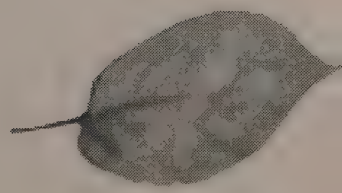
January, 1994

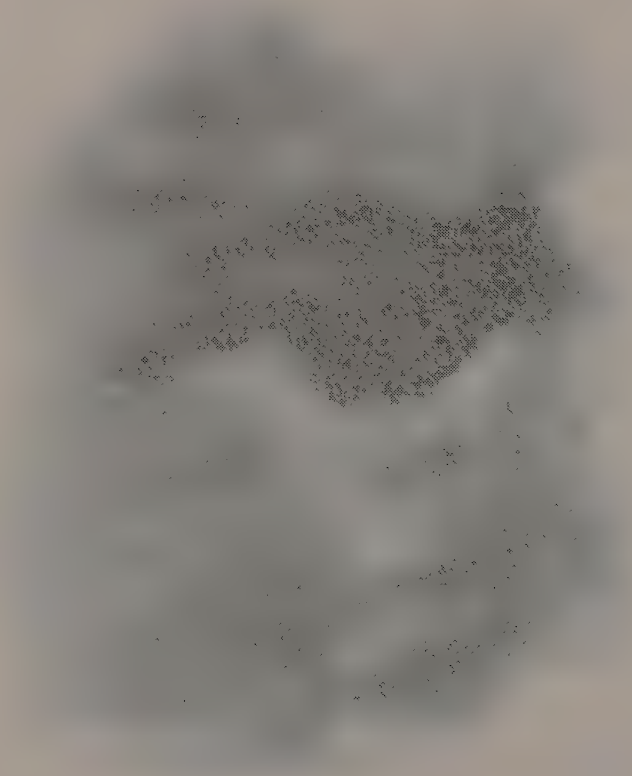
PRAYER ON A SNOWY DAY

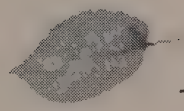


O God
Your love falls softly upon me, like gentle flakes of winter snow,
and I, as barren tree, lift hungry branches upward hoping to catch its fullness.
Ultimately I gather precious fragments where branch and trunk coincide
or where age and weathering provide deformity to catch the precious gift.

Grant, Creator of all that lives and is, that this enlivening Love may be the nurture of my leafing and bearing fruit and that, in nurturing others, I may give thanks to you, Source of Infinite Love.

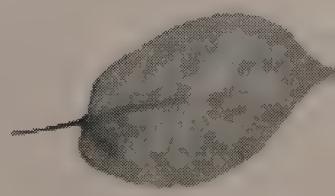


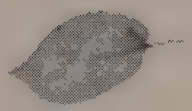




A CLOUD

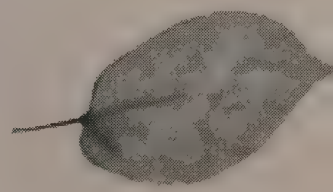
A cloud is,
At least for a moment,
A wisp, a tuft, a tatter, a mist,
Whipped cream, fog, a thunderhead,
Ever changing,
Seldom alone
Part of a transient crowd
And always unique
Wind's playmate and accomplice,
Teasing, sheltering, warning, weeping,
Protective, accompanying, thought provoking,
The stuff of dreams.
A cloud is.





Summer has gone – once again.
First the petals,
Then the leaves
Late fruit and harvest from the fields
curling up and
turning in
to protect the seed of life
deep within the heart of Mother Earth.

And now
We seem alone, bereft of light
as darkness overcomes the day,
cold and shrunken, in the snows of
winter's storm.
Suddenly, a star in Bethlehem's sky,
Light, and warmth of love,
Bring release for hope and peace,
A promise of new life,
And ultimately, of everlasting joy.

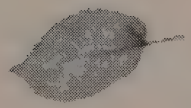


ROOTS

Drip Drip Drip Drip
drip drip
drip drip

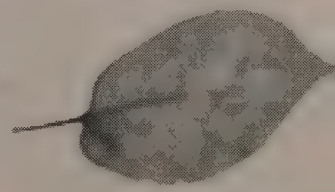
Buxom and tall, the Douglas firs outside our
bedroom window shed vestiges of last night's
heavy rain while eastern rays catch rainbow
sparkles 'mid blackberry brambles
that climb the aging wooden garage.
Beyond the fence and over the inlet
lies Sleeping Beauty, gently cradled in the mauve
and blue of Grouse and Hollyburn
– always guarding us
– always breathing hope and peace and strength
to refresh and renew.

Quickly rising sun bounces back from north shore
mountains to penetrate, here and there,
along the needle-padded path of Lord
Stanley's Park.
In muted light great quiet reigns,
– except for sweet tree-top conversations
and the hustle and bustle of hidden life below.
Along the path well-rounded slugs
trace silvery record of their journeys,
and among luxuriant fern more prosaic huckleberry
and salmon berry offer tasty treats to
hungry hikers.



Ocean spray, result of wakes of
foreign freighters,
beckons to refresh us.
West wind calls us onwards
to English Bay, to Kitsilano, Jericho
and then Locarno, Spanish Banks and yes,
even to Wreck Beach,
to taste delights
of Sun's majestic end-of-course
in glory of gold and red
and flaming orange.

We turn to face twilight's softer blue
and green and primrose yellow,
shades echoed in the thrust
that joins the Fraser and Pacific.
Along the river bank –
the Musqueam – home of elder, hunter, and their
chief, picture-perfect farms providing Asian
peddlers stock to feed a diet conscious city
a now sleeping fishing village and its cannery,
whose road then leads us back to
gleaming city lights.
The people
the German, British, French, and Jew,
Oriental, Spanish, Caribbean,
the Christian, Muslim, First Nations, and Metis,
the Indian, Buddhist and many more –
All have been my mentors, have formed and
guided me.

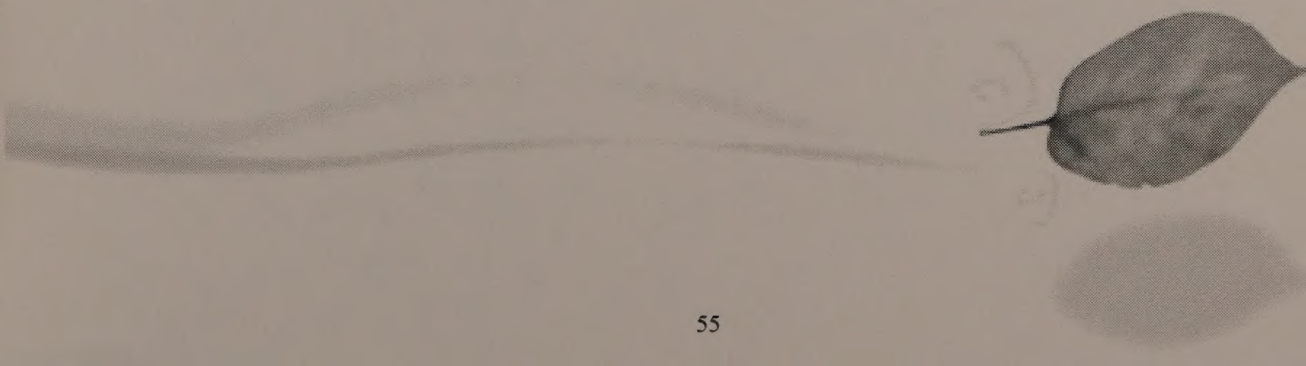


More than jewels in London's Tower
or France's cathedral glass,
or Greek gods in ancient temples,
or casbah on North Africa's famous shore,
or even Maachu Pichu
or Salvadoran martyr sites
do these first memories speak to me
and give themselves to all
that I have become.

Rain droplets
Trees
Sunshine's rays
Forest depths
Ocean shore
and sunset points
People...
Home...

All have entered into my space
and sung their song to me.
And then, I, in almost tone-deaf harmony,

have become as one with them.



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